How to Build a Non-Toxic Gaming Community Part 1: Assigning Roles

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Hello Xbox Ambassadors!

As Community Managers, we're often asked for advice on how to grow and lead a positive community. Whether your community is focused on content creation, women in gaming, or another gaming-related topic, we have some tips to share on how to cultivate a healthy community.

We're publishing a two-part series of articles highlighting **how to build a non-toxic community**. These are valuable lessons because safe, non-toxic experiences will help your community expand through retention. A healthy community grows better, retains members, looks good to sponsors, and makes it fun for everyone.

The tips below come from experiences being Community Managers and Content Creators as well as notes from the PAX West 2019 panel "How to Build a Healthy Community Without Toxicity!"

The Key Takeaway: To build a non-toxic community, the first thing you should do is clearly establish official Roles and Rules. Once they have been established, you'll want to enforce them while still being open to useful feedback from your members.

The role of leadership

Let’s start with you. Your Role is generally a leadership type role considering you are a founder. However, this can change depending on the type of community you have and how you want to manage it. My experience has always been that the leader(s) should be the representative of how your community members engage. If you make a joke, they’ll make more jokes, if it’s a pun, they’ll make puns.

The leader influences the community through attention. Whenever you do or don’t provide attention to an action, whether positively or negatively, you are sending a message.

For example, you dislike puns and respond “ugh” to your community when they make a pun. That attention can encourage the sharing of puns for those who do, *like* the “eye roll” response. Alternatively, you could have said, “I dislike puns, and would like you to stop.” That direct and communicative attention can discourage the behavior. If you completely ignore when the community does puns, the lack of attention shows puns are allowed. With no attention, the puns may diminish UNLESS other members in the community provide encouragement for punning.

Attention is the action that directs the community. As a leader, if you interact with something, you encourage it. If you ignore something, you discourage it. A request to stop will generally discourage it, and if it doesn’t, a Ban or Timeout is the logical next step.

Defining other community roles

Community rolls

Let’s say that you are unsure what a leader does in your community, and you are also ready to introduce other roles. To define a role, make a list of things that your community needs and assign the items to yourself, moderators, and the community.

Here’s an example list:

1. Do you make rules?
2. Do you greet new people?
3. Do you coach people who break rules?
4. Do you moderate?
5. Do you answer repeat questions?
6. Do you share Youtube links?
7. Do you post announcements?
8. Do you have expected times in the community?
9. Do you make content?
10. Do you share content?
11. And on
12. And onnnn
13. And onnnnnnn
14. Until you feel you have made an exhaustive list.

As for the Xbox Ambassadors community, our assigned roles cover a variety of things like coach behavior, make rules, answer questions, empower,

make announcements, manage the blog, manage the discord, talk to play hosts, and the list goes on.

This brings us to an important point, under assign roles on yourself and moderators. It's a lot easier to increase attention on your community than to scale back. As professional CMs, we can assign multiple hours a day to the work. However, if you are running a community AND have another job, go easy on yourself and volunteer moderators.

Be very, VERY specific with your role, and the roles of your other community members. Make them public and post them in an easily accessible place. Be open to feedback on your roles, too. Some roles will need to flex and that's okay. Remember to ensure that you have an easy process of taking feedback. If someone says "this sucks," that isn't feedback. If a person says "I want to be able to greet new people like mods do," that is feedback.

Empowering your community

One of the best ways to "go easy" on yourself and moderators is to empower your community. Encourage people to solve certain issues with resources available to them. For Xbox Ambassadors, when someone is "Looking for a group?" they check the LFG in the Discord, rather than ask a CM to help them coordinate one. If you "Need help with a quiz?" an Ambassador can check the #ambassador_help channel.

The community learns to help itself, and more resourceful community members help new community members. This creates a positive cohesion as new members feel welcomed and established members feel valuable. It also helps with the SCALE of a community. Communities that grow bigger need more resources. Empowering your community means those resources are spread over more people, so more people can help and receive help in the growing community.

To be Continued!

Thank you for reading the first piece of the blog! There was so much info we wanted to talk about, we decided to turn it into multiple pieces so that each piece can get the best attention to make it the best read. We'll follow up with more discussions on rules, transparency, and feedback, plus some tools of the trade, in the next one.